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Multicultural Educational Digital Game: A Report on the Importance of Creating Digital
Cultural Games and an Analysis of a Mexican-American Cultural Game

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Cultural Games and an Analysis of a Mexican-American Cultural Game

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Report

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Dedication

This report is dedicated to my grandparents, Agustina and Anastacio Estrada. My altar is for you, *Abuelita*, you will always be remembered.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my appreciation to my family, friends, mom and boyfriend who have listened to me endlessly discuss my project and the importance of cultural games. Without their support and motivation, I would not have been able to complete this report. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Resta and Dr. Liu who helped me learn skills and tools that aided me in completing this report and the game.

Abstract

Multicultural Educational Digital Game: A Report on the Importance of Creating Digital Cultural Games and an Analysis of a Mexican-American Cultural Game

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Abstract: This report discusses the importance of digital cultural games, an analysis of the game that I created, Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead), and the connection of the game to an existing curriculum. I created the game with teachers and students in mind. Many teachers do not have the proper resources, such as funds, supplies, and cultural knowledge, to create activities and lessons that teach students about different cultures. As a result, students do not learn about cultures other than the ones they are surrounded by. Teaching children about various cultures, expands the knowledge of the world they live in and improves the interactions they may have with others who do not have similar backgrounds. The Dia de los Muertos game that I created can be used by students or anyone who has access to a tablet. It teaches the user about a Mexican-American cultural tradition without having prior knowledge. The purpose of the game is to introduce the Mexican-American culture and to motivate users to learn more.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

For this report, I analyzed a digital cultural game that I created, which can be used in conjunction with a Mexican-American curriculum. There aren't many digital cultural games available that teachers can use to teach students about different cultures. Creating this game allowed me to expand the existing collection of cultural games and use what I know about implementing technology to existing learning pedagogies. This, in theory, would not be difficult if all existing technology was available to all schools; but many schools lack current technology. This lack of technology helped me narrow down the most adequate platform. I decided to make the game native to tablet computers because a growing number of school districts, through government grants, already provide these devices to their students. Having the game digitally available in devices owned by school districts helps teachers avoid requesting additional materials and supplies from already limited budgets.

The Texas Education Agency recently approved a set of curriculum standards for an ethnic studies elective course on Mexican-American culture. These standards provide teachers and districts with a set of guidelines to follow as they teach students about Mexican-American culture. Implementing curriculum standards like these on digital games allows teachers to quantify learning objectives while adhering to the required curriculum. In addition, digital games remove the limits of being 'stuck' in the classroom. For example, in SecondLife, users can explore downtown London without having the need to be there physically. Having this freedom gives teachers the opportunity to approach the curriculum with more flexibility.

Chapter 2. Introduction to Digital Cultural Games

A quick google search on “digital culture games” will bring up articles about the culture of gaming, which is defined as a culture of people who play video games or “how children interact with non-educational games, outside of the school setting” (Chmiel, 2012). There isn’t a lot of research present that discusses educational games with an emphasis on culture. Although there are a few computer games that teach students about certain celebrations such as Chinese New Year, there is still a lack of games for other cultures. Through the following points, I will discuss why I chose to focus on digital cultural games. I will present points on the benefits of multicultural education, the impact of educational games and explain how a combination of culture and digital games (digital cultural games) can have an improvement in students’ cultural awareness.

Multi-Cultural Education

Levy (1996) used the three definitions of multicultural education from Patty Ramsey’s book, *Teaching and Learning in a Diverse, Multicultural Education for Young Children* (1987) as an “underlying theme to many good programs [to integrating culture in the classroom] for young children within the United States.” The first definition is that multicultural education:

- a) encompasses many dimensions of human differences beside culture such as race, occupation, socioeconomic status, age, gender, sexual orientation, and various physical traits and needs, b) is relevant to all children, even those who live in homogenous areas, and c) extends beyond the boundaries of this country to beliefs and attitudes about people all over the world (as cited in Levy, 1996).

Through these three definitions of the perspective of multicultural education, it is apparent that culture is more than race and the physical traits. Learning about different cultures “helps children be more sensitive to people” (Levy, 1996). There have been various studies that demonstrate that children can “recognize ethnic differences by the age three” (Liu & Blila, 1995). If young children can recognize ethnic differences, then, they should also be taught how to properly interact with others who do not look like them. Using the multicultural education model, this practice would be carried out in schools by teaching kids about different cultural traditions throughout the year. “Careful attention is paid to the types of...activities that are provided and cultivating a willingness among children to cooperate” (Levy, 1996).

“It is important – if our aim is to reduce bias and prejudice – that we address the responses to diversity – the misconceptions, the fears, and the uneasiness about differences that young children can develop as they become aware of the dissimilarities between people” (Liu & Blila, 1995). To avoid the continuation of the misconceptions and fears from children, it is important to start teaching them at a young age. Kids start attending primary school at the age of five. They develop their “cognitive ability to distinguish color differences and to recognize differences in the size, shape, and texture of objects” (Liu & Blila, 1995) before turning five. If schools ignore the importance of teaching students different cultures, they will not have the opportunity to be open to learning about the differences of others. “Prejudice [increases] as children grow older” (Liu & Blila, 1995), but if those prejudices are replaced with real information on the people who are affected, the children’s perceptions of others would be aligned with facts and cultural knowledge that surrounds different cultures. Multicultural education is not the only form to teach children about different cultures, the other model of cultural teaching is International Education. International education is an “attempt to move

beyond holidays and teach children... about clothing, food, music, shelter, cultural celebrations...” (Levy, 1996). While international education provides students with an in-depth knowledge of culture, schools in the United States do not use the international education model; the multicultural education model is the most commonly used for teaching culture. The game discussed in this report used the multicultural education model to explain a portion of the Mexican-American culture.

Educational Games

There are parents, teachers, and administrators who will argue that video games are not an appropriate form of learning and see games as “mere entertainment” (Shaffer, Squire, Halverson, & Gee, 2005) but educational games are a tool for learners to learn through activities and predetermined rules (Allery, 2014). Shaffer et al. (2005) argued that even the biggest critics of games know that people learn from playing video games. The different categories of video games range from multiplayer, simulations and role-playing genres, to name a few. These varying approaches to video games teach players different mechanics. In multiplayer games, players learn to play the game in the most efficient way to beat the opposing team whether alone or with teammates. As they play with other players, they learn to communicate with each other to reach a mutual goal. Users must also learn to navigate the interface of the game which gives them a 360 view of the game compared to players who play on single mode. Single mode is when players play individually. In simulation games, players partake in a real-world scenario. These simulations provide players with skills and techniques that are applicable to the different situations. For example, there is a pilot simulation game that allows users to learn how to fly a plane without taking a flight course. This simulation does not replace an in-person course, but it does give an opportunity to practice real-world skills. In role-playing games, players are put into

a fictional role as a character with a set of skills. Multiplayer, simulations, and role-playing are not the only types of genres of video games, but they are some of the most commonly known because they are easily integrated with one another.

Having an understanding of some of the genres of video games that exist for entertainment, facilitates the connection and possibilities in educational games. Khenissi, Essalmi, Jemni, Kinshuk, Graf, & Chen (2016) used the Felder Silverman Learning Model to compile a list of genres that are used for education, which are: Games based on puzzles, God Games, Casual Games, Games based on Simulations. “Simulations are designed to teach someone about the system by observing the result of actions or decisions through feedback generated by the simulation in real-time, accelerated time, or slowed time” (Rieber, 1996). In the world of education, simulation games are commonly used in the medical field. Experiential simulations put learners “in situations that are too costly or hazardous to [be provided] in a real-world setting” (Gredler, 2012). Educational games for younger people, such as elementary students, games “resembles what [Chmiel] often refers to as a ‘digital worksheet’ (clicking, dragging and dropping science vocabulary) was the most successful in building the type of skills most valued in a culture of assessment-driven schools” (Chmiel, 2012). The way in which the educational games are designed for primary aged students needs to be heavily focused on the intrinsic motivation that students can receive through the game. Intrinsic motivation “refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable” (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The game that is used in this report focuses on intrinsic motivation through the simulation of creating an altar.

Digital Cultural Games

The lack of research for digital cultural games helped me delve into the topics individually to identify the pedagogical instruction to teach cultural education to create the Dia de los Muertos game. It also reinforced the belief that digital cultural games can expand the cultural knowledge during a child's education. Liu and Blila (1995) posed arguments that coincide with the importance of having culture included in the classroom. Using digital cultural games to integrate culture in the classroom removes the burden on the teacher to find the resources to carry out the activities or games in the classroom. Through the different variations of games, the simulation genre seemed the most appropriate to have kids simulate taking part in a cultural holiday. Merging the research in cultural education and educational games serves as a basis to this report in the discussion of a digital cultural game. I include the term digital because there are multiple variations of activities and games that can be used in the classroom without the use of technology. Shaffer et al. (2005) discussed the implications that our world has because of the rise of technology and how video games help "us learn by integrating thinking, social interaction, and technology, all in service of doing things we care about."

Using an educational game to teach about culture would also require less time from the teachers. For students to get the full benefits of a lesson, activities are used to put into practice what they learned. Some schools may not have the necessary material or support to administer the activity properly. Teachers may also not have the knowledge needed to design an activity for certain cultures. Having digital cultural games can lessen the burden on teachers to create activities based on their available resources and improve the motivation of students if the games are designed correctly. "Poorly developed games and simulations often have negative effects on students" (Gredler, 2012). Including digital culture games in the class also requires that the

design of the game allows teachers to use it efficiently. If the design of the digital cultural game has clear objectives and goals that can be easily aligned to curriculum, teachers will be more inclined to use the game in their classrooms.

Chapter 3. Connecting the game to Curriculum

Curriculum Connection

For this report, I will be using the curriculum designed by the Oakland Museum Education Department of California. This curriculum provides Historical & Cultural Context of Dia de los Muertos and classroom activities linked to cultural content. The explanation of the concept of the altar is retrieved from the Oakland Museum curriculum (see Appendix A, Appendix B). The game is designed to replace the activity that is used for the curriculum (see Appendix C). Although it is only replacing an activity, the game also contains the information on the items that belong on the altar; this gives an opportunity for students to be exposed to the information twice. I condensed the information from the curriculum to decrease the cognitive overload that kids can experience with too much text on the screen.

The activity also requires the class to decide on one person to honor. The game would not require the class to decide on one person because the altar is created individually rather than with the class. Having students be able to create an altar on their own allows them to be more creative. If the teachers have them present their creations to the class and others, they will also need to provide reasons as to why they chose the items; as noted in the activity description.

The one thing currently missing from the game to align correctly with the lesson would be the section of the activity that requires students to write a paragraph on the person they are honoring. Teachers can still require students to write a paragraph to use along with their altar presentation. The lesson also includes a step so that class can spend time creating items that go on the altar such as, *Papel Picado* (tissue paper banner), *Calaveras* (skulls) and *Pan de Muerto* (bread of the dead). Teachers can decide to do this step, or they can use the time to focus on the origins of the Dia de los Muertos celebrations.

Technology-Supported Pedagogy

Hughes (2005) described three different variations of how technology can be used in the classroom which are “a) technology functioning as replacement, b) amplification, c) transformation.” The Dia de los Muertos game fits within the description of technology functioning as transformation. Pea argued that “technology as transformation may change student’s learning routines, including content, cognitive processes, and problem-solving” (as cited in Hughes, 2005) or as discussed by Reinking it can transform “teachers’ instructional practices and roles in the classroom” (as cited in Hughes, 2005).

The game provides the same mechanisms as the activity, but the game is more efficient and effective because it gives students the opportunity to create an altar without the physical material that is required to build one. The materials that students need are found virtually in the game. Creating the altars virtually also allows the students to share what they are creating with people from all over the world, which they could not do if they were creating altars as an in-class activity. Teachers can choose to take the time to have students find altars that they like from other people through the game, prompting them to reflect on why the student chose to design the altar the way they did.

Chapter 4. Dia de los Muertos Game Analysis

Game Description

The purpose of the game is to give students the opportunity to create their own Dia de los Muertos altar. Most lessons that teach Dia de los Muertos have an activity that have students build an altar as a class. The app will allow students to create individual altars instead of as a class. Students have more creative freedom and the opportunity to create an altar that is personal. Creating the private altar also gives teachers a chance to have students share their creations with other students. After creating the altar, students can also share their creations within the app so that students from different places around the world can see the various altars.

Framework

The GREM – Game Rules Scenario Model (the E stands for the E in Scenario) will be used to analyze the game. This framework does not focus on the design of specific game genres and can be used for multidisciplinary projects. This model “compiles general game features that are often regarded in the literature as significant in producing engaging, fun and educational game experience” (Zarraonandia, Diaz, Aedo, & Ruiz, 2015). The model is divided into two sub-models which are the game rule model and game scenario model.

Game Rule Model

The elements of the game rule model are mechanics, goals, feedback, socialization, storytelling & debriefing, and reward and persistence. Each of the different sections is represented through different levels beginning with mechanics and ending with rewards and persistence. The different levels represent the way a “game is carried out from the inside out...” (Zarraonandia et al., 2015).

Mechanics

“Mechanics are the entities that can appear in the game, their state, and their actions allowed to perform over such entities” (Zarraonandia et al., 2015). For the Dia de los Muertos game, the entities are the items that the user can move. The states of the items would be either used or not used on the altar. Actions that can be performed on them are: moved anywhere on the level of the altar for which the item belongs to; they can pick from varied states of the items as demonstrated in Figure 1 & Figure 2; and the items can be deleted

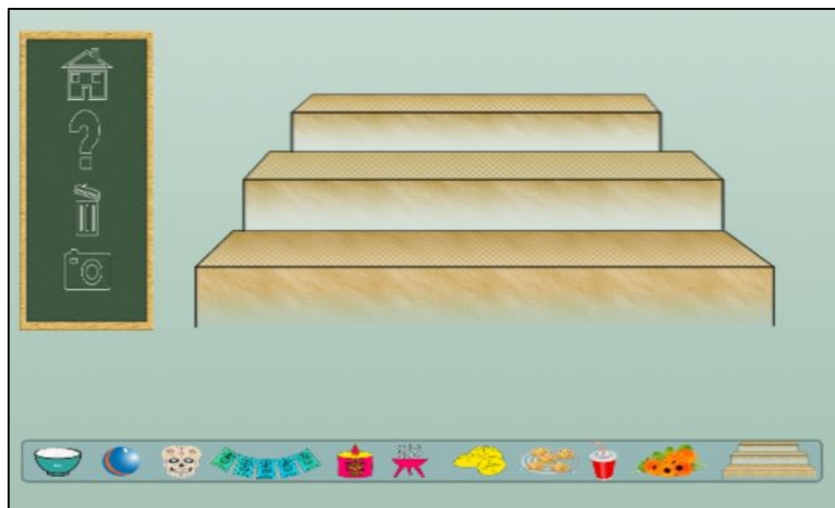


Figure 1. The state of the items here are "not used".

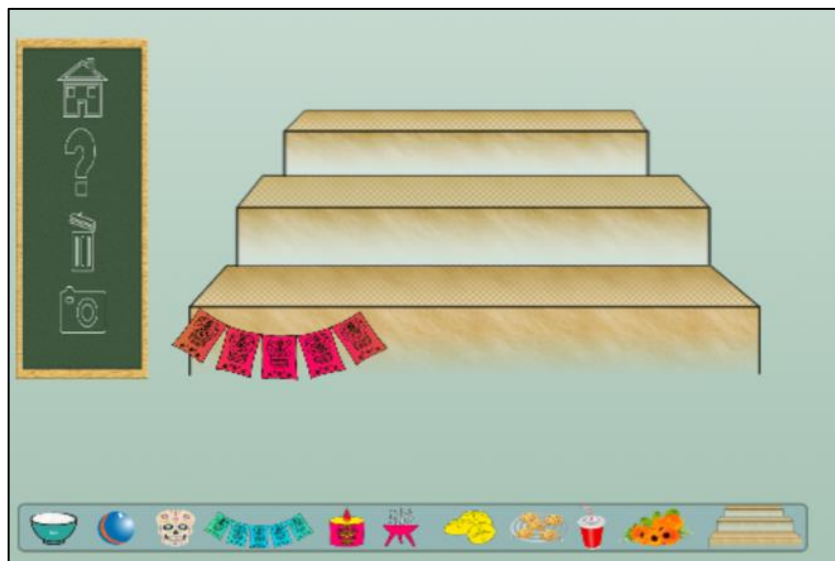


Figure 2. The state of the items here are "used".

Goals

“Goal levels is defined in terms of game objectives which can be associated with an educational purpose and be [described] as situations to achieve (goals) or to avoid (fails), and restrictions in the way [it] can be accomplished” (Zarraonandia et al., 2015). The objective for Dia de los Muertos is that the user needs to put items on the altar that honors their loved one on the correct level for the item. The user wants to avoid doing the following: Adding things that the person they are honoring didn’t like and placing items on the wrong level. For example, if the user was creating an altar to honor their grandmother, and their grandmother loved pizza, the user would drag the pizza item on to the second level of the altar. They can continue to add to the altar until they feel like they have added enough items on the altar to represent their honoree. The game does not have any restrictions.

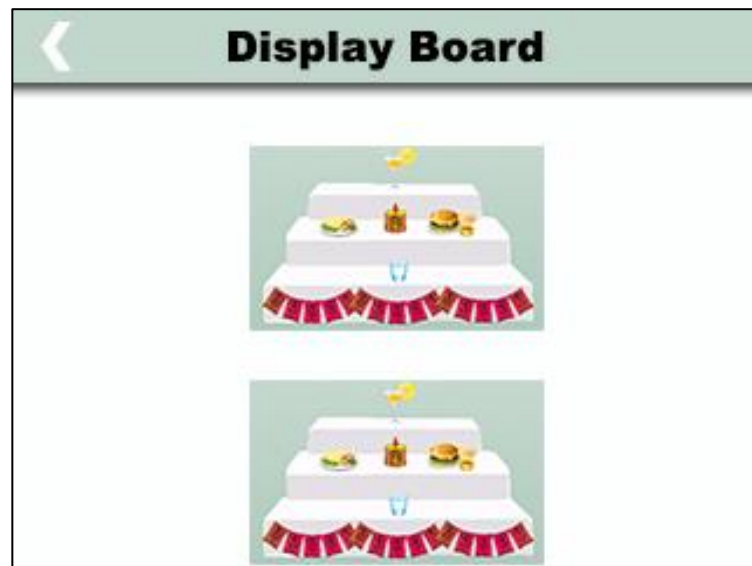


Figure 1. The game's display board

Feedback, socialization, storytelling and debriefing

“The third layer allows designers to increase the complexity of the educational game (EG) definition, enhancing its playability, educational properties and the player's motivation”

(Zarraonandia et al., 2015). This third layer is divided by socialization, debriefing, feedback, and storytelling. Socialization is the section of the game where designers introduce roles, groups, and synchronization rules that are associated with the social interaction aspect of the games. The Dia de los Muertos game provides socialization in the form of a display board where users can add their altars to and view the altars of others as demonstrated in Figure 3. The game currently does not have the capabilities to allow users to interact with others while creating the altar. In the display board users have the option to include a description of their altar to provide a moment of debriefing in “order to facilitate the connection of the lessons learned in the virtual world with their application in real life...” (Zarraonandia et al., 2015). Users will also receive feedback through small pop-ups that will appear on the screen when they put the item on the wrong item such as “This item does not belong on this level, try putting it on another level!”. This statement would provide the user with an explanation of why the item does not belong on that level and what they should do to continue with the game. The only storytelling component within the game is that the altar is created in honor of a loved one. The storytelling component is the reason as to why they are creating an altar and provides context on what the user should put on the altar.

Reward & Persistence

“...level 4 makes it possible to enhance the EG design with mechanisms which, whilst not modifying the game logic, can have an impact on the EG playability, its difficulty or the player’s motivation” (Zarraonandia et al., 2015). The Dia de los Muertos game does not have a reward system during gameplay because death is a sensitive topic. In the future, it may be possible to include a reward system based on the number of “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” that the altars receive. The score would be displayed next to the altars when added to the display board. Creating more altars would give users more opportunities to create different variations.

The “thumbs up” and “thumbs down” feature would arrange the altars in the order of the highest number of “thumbs up” rather than displaying them by most recent.

Game Scenario Model

Game scenario model focuses on the visual setting of educational games which is focused on the representation, services, interface, and interactions of the game. “The definitions of the design entities on a specific level are based on the definitions of the design entities at the innermost levels” (Zarraonandia et al., 2015).

Game Representations

“This level provides three different types of entities, scenes, characters, and contexts, which can be used to represent the elements of a game rules definition” (Zarraonandia et al., 2015). There is only one scene in the Dia de los Muertos game with game action. This scene is represented by an altar that students use to add their items to build their own Dia de los Muertos altar. To set the atmosphere of the game and add contextual elements, there is Spanish music playing in the background while users build their altars. These attributes provide an authentic feel to the game and sets the students in an immersive setting.

Game Services

“The second layer of the scenario definition allows designers to specify a set of services that will increase the possibilities of the games played within that scenario, and that are described through the set of functionalities they support” (Zarraonandia et al., 2015). The current version of Dia de los Muertos does not have any services available. Examples of game services include a feature that allows users to “like” altars on the display board, and an in-game chat. However, I would not add a chat feature because the primary audience for the game are young children who do not have the necessary knowledge to navigate negative comments. Having a chat feature

would also require teachers to be attentive to everything that students are doing while using the game.

Game Interface and Interaction

The game's interface "could either be UI controls, such as buttons, check box or sliders, or be used to support the visualization of one of the elements of the innermost layers... virtual interactions performed on IU elements, such as to push a virtual button or to drag and drop an interface element." (Zarraonandia et al., 2015). The UI elements that are currently present in the game are a home button, question mark, trash can, camera, and the items for the altar (see Figure 4). The home button, when pressed, returns the user to the initial screen. When the user presses on the question mark, they are taken to the screen that details the information of the different items. The trash can is a visual element that users can use to drag items that are on the altar to delete. The camera icon, when pressed, takes a screenshot of the altar and is posted on a display board. Items at the bottom of the screen represent the different items that can be used on the altar. Users click on an item and they are presented with more items that are related. Users can then drag and drop the item they choose to a level on the altar.

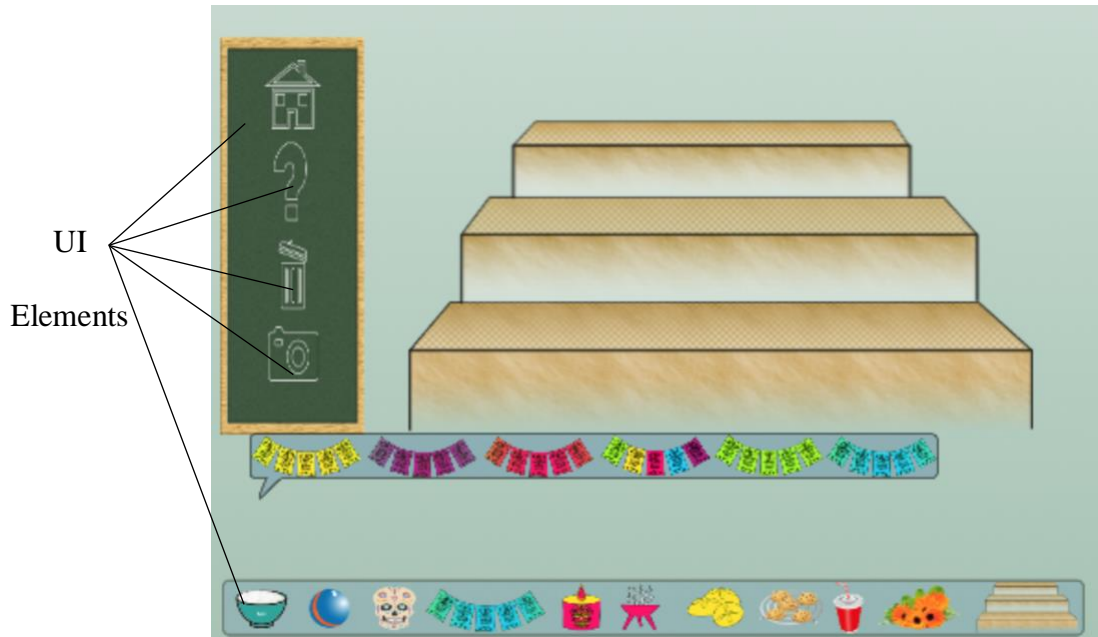


Figure 2. UI elements of the game

Chapter 5. Reflection

Through the game analysis, I explained the different features of the game and described the mechanisms that the game currently has. The analysis provided clear explanations of how the game can be used to facilitate the class activity to create a Dia de los Muertos altar. “Too many assumptions remain about what games do and to what advantage we can use them” (Shelton, 2007). Creating games for education without these assumptions require extensive research on the goals and topics that the game aims to teach the users. The designers of educational games need to understand what students will learn from the game instead of determining the intended content (Chmiel, 2012). The game provides the same objectives and goals as the activity used in the curriculum discussed. Even though the game is designed to be used in the classroom to provide a technological amplification to the lesson, kids can use it outside of class to create more than one altar. They can take what they learn and show it to their parents and other family members. Sharing what they learn from a different culture can expand their knowledge of others and provide interest to learn more about it.

Working on this game was challenging but it provided me with an opportunity to put into practice what I was learning in my classes. This included the best methods on how to deliver information in a digital form and connecting learning objectives to the goals of the game. Through this project I combined my interest in educational games and Mexican-American culture. I appreciate the opportunity I had to create a game that can be used in schools and introduce students to a Mexican-American tradition

Appendices

Appendix A: Mexican-American Día de los Muertos Celebration

THE CELEBRATION OF LOS DÍAS DE LOS MUERTOS BY MEXICAN AMERICANS

In the United States during the 1960s, Chicanos (Mexican Americans) organized a national political movement to secure economic and social change to benefit Mexican Americans. Chicano artists realized their work could play an important role in furthering the goals of the movement. For inspiration they looked to images produced by Mexican artists prior to and after the Mexican revolution of 1910. Mexican artists of this period had used their art to convey political messages to the people, especially through murals and posters. Following their example, Chicano artists also popularized the mural and the poster as a political art form and a way to explore Mexican art styles and themes.

This rediscovery and association with Mexican art influenced Mexican Americans to further explore and establish ties with their Mexican heritage. Chicanos adapted Mexican music, art, and customs as expressions of Mexican American life. The celebration of *Los Días de los Muertos* was of special attraction to Mexican Americans as the customs associated with this festival acknowledged their Mexican ancestors.

In the early 1970s, artistic and cultural groups within the Mexican American community began to invite artists and community members to install *ofrendas* in galleries, neighborhood centers, and other public places. The creators of the *ofrendas* took this opportunity to pay homage to Mexican personages of historical and social significance and to community members whose contributions deserved recognition. In succeeding years, *ofrendas* were augmented with theatrical productions and outdoor processions.

The Days of the Dead practices in the United States enable Mexican Americans to establish bonds with their historical and cultural roots and to generate an understanding and appreciation of Mexican culture in the general community. These practices also inspire public interest in other ethnic traditions in the United States. Days of the Dead celebrations are open to and enjoyed by all members of the community. Since death and the loss of loved ones is a common human experience, these rituals promote feelings of kinship among all participants.

Photos by Michael Temperio



Las Mañanitas Portal
Ofrenda by Jeffrey Ferns
In honor of his brother
Days of the Dead Exhibition, 2004
Oakland Museum of California

Figure 3. Explanation of the Día de los Muertos celebration. Adapted from “Día de los Muertos Curriculum Packet,” by B.C Hocker, 2005, p. 13. Copyright 2005 by Bea Carillo Hocker and Oakland Museum of California.

Appendix B: Curriculum: Ritual Objects

RITUAL OBJECTS OF THE OFRENDA

CANDLES

In religious ceremonies, the lighting of candles can symbolize enlightenment, new spiritual life, or that the participants have started the process of worship. In Mexico, candles are placed on the *ofrenda* to light and guide the way of the souls to the altar. The Days of the Dead clay candleholders range from the very plain to ornate candelabra.



SUGAR SKULLS

The Days of the Dead sugar skulls are created in a variety of sizes from sugar paste pressed into ceramic molds. The *calaveras* (skulls) are decorated with flowers and scrolls of colored icing and metallic colored foils. Some bear popular Mexican names written on the forehead and are for the *ofrendas* but also for living children as a treat. Friends and sweethearts also exchange skulls with their names. The living consume the skulls and associate pleasant sensations with their symbolic deaths and understand that in the end, death will feed on the living.

ZEMPASÚCHIL

The yellow marigold, *zempasúchil*, was the symbolic flower of death of the Aztecs of pre-Hispanic Mexico. The color of this flower that blooms in November is closely identified with this particular holiday since, according to Aztec mythology, yellow is associated with the kingdom of the dead. Flowers on the *ofrenda*, along with other organic elements, refer to the earth and regenerative forces of nature. In some regions, marigold petals are strewn to create a symbolic pathway leading souls to the *ofrenda*.

A GLASS OF WATER

Water is placed on the *ofrenda* to quench the thirst of the souls after their long journey and also to emphasize that water is essential to life.

INCENSE

Each region that keeps the traditions of *Los Días de los Muertos* creates its own distinct style of ceramic incense burners for use at gravesites and on the *ofrendas*. The burners hold resin from the copal tree and the perfumed smoke surrounds the altar and grave, providing an atmosphere of mystery. The burning of incense has been associated with ritual since early history by civilizations throughout the world. The almost magical transformation of earth matter (tree resin) into something ethereal (smoke) has motivated people to associate incense with the symbolic transformation of the physical to the supernatural. The rising movement of smoke toward the heavens has also inspired humanity to use incense as an offering to the gods.

PAN DE MUERTOS

Pan de muertos, or bread of the dead, is specially made to be placed on *ofrendas* and graves. It is sweet bread favored with anise, orange peel, and orange glaze. The bread is baked in a wide variety of forms and decoration. There are round loaves with a central raised knob of dough, representing the skull, and crossed bone-shaped decorations radiating from the central knob. Some loaves are very sculptural, representing human shapes, some with "baker's clay" (bread and water) heads of Christ or angels stuck into protruding knobs of dough; others are in the shapes of angels, animals, rings, or

Figure 4. Items used on the altar. Adapted from "Día de los Muertos Curriculum Packet," by B.C Hocker, 2005, p. 13. Copyright 2005 by Bea Carillo Hocker and Oakland Museum of California.

Appendix C: Curriculum: Classroom Celebration

ACTIVITY #8

CLASSROOM DAYS OF THE DEAD CELEBRATION

The following activity is designed to facilitate the creation of a classroom *ofrenda*. The activity includes some approaches to acquainting students with the formal properties and cultural content of the celebration of *Los Días de los Muertos*.

Your class can re-create a Days of the Dead celebration. Students will construct an *ofrenda* and make facsimiles of traditional *ofrenda* objects. Preparation will occur during the month of October and culminate with a gathering of family, friends, or classmates.

PREPARATION:

1. Decide upon the day and time of your celebration and invite family and friends or another class to come to your classroom at that time.
2. Make a list of all the tasks that need to be accomplished for your ceremony. Create a calendar to plan out those tasks leading up to the celebration.
3. Use one of the images in this book or one of your own to make a Days of the Dead invitation. You can invite your guests to bring their personal mementos or decoration for placement on the *ofrenda*.
4. During the month of October, make paper flowers, masks, paper sugar skulls, *papel picado* banners, skeleton puppets, and *pan de muertos* as decoration for your altar.
5. Decide to whom you will dedicate your *ofrenda*. It can be past family members, heroes of history or your community, or anyone who you feel contributed something special while they were alive.
6. Research the lives of these people and write a short paragraph about them. Copy their picture on a copy machine and glue the picture and paragraph on colored poster board, leaving a border around both which you can decorate to look like a frame.
7. You can use a table, desk, or countertop for your *ofrenda*. You can add height by using sturdy cardboard boxes as tiers. Cover the boxes with a pretty tablecloth or paper covering. A flower arch is a traditional element of Mexican *ofrendas*. Everyone will place their Days of the Dead projects on the *ofrenda*. (See "Ritual Objects of the *Ofrenda*" on p.14 for further information on altar decorations.)

Figure 5. Page one of the Dia de los Muertos activity. Adapted from "Dia de los Muertos Curriculum Packet," by B.C Hocker, 2005, p. 13. Copyright 2005 by Bea Carillo Hocker and Oakland Museum of California

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